



PREVENTION OPPORTUNITIES UNDER THE BIG SKY

PRECAUTIONS TO KEEP SUMMER FUN AND ENJOYABLE!

This issue of *Montana Public Health* offers important prevention steps to keep summer healthy for Montanans.

Mosquitos Warm weather and increased outdoor activity increase risk for mosquito-borne diseases, including West Nile Virus. A little knowledge of mosquito ecology accompanied by appropriate precaution can help people protect themselves. Mosquito numbers peak in late July and early August, but danger exists from mid-June through September. Mosquitoes lay eggs in almost anything that holds water, from buckets and birdbaths to marshes and ponds, so whether persons are barbecuing in their backyard or camping at a lake, they may be at risk. Protection comes from eliminating mosquito breeding habitat around homes and by avoiding mosquito bites. [see Box : Prevention Steps]

Snakes and insects Snake bites and bites/stings by insects caused many emergency department (ED) visits and hospital admissions during 2010 through 2012. Twenty-nine ED visits and 22 hospital admissions resulted from snake bites and 160 ED visits and 15 hospital admissions from spider bites. The majority of the snake bites (59%) occurred in July and August and all but 2 (4%) during May through October; 79% of the spider bites occurred during May through October. Stings by bees, hornets and wasps caused 1642 ED visits and 8 hospital admissions; 93% of these stings occurred during May through October. Males were bitten by snakes three times more often than were females but there was no substantial difference by sex in spider bites or insect stings. [see Box: Prevention Steps]

Water safety Drowning is a preventable cause of death. Of the 163 unintentional drowning deaths during 2005 through 2012, 100 (61%) occurred during May through September (Figure 1). Of these summer drownings, 90 (90%) were in outdoor bodies of water (including boat related drownings). Alcohol and water recreation do not mix, especially if young children are present. [see Box: Prevention Steps]

Prevention Steps

(Mosquitos)

- Wear protective clothing and use insect repellent (CDC recommends use of products containing DEET for adults and children aged > 2 months)
- Limit outdoor activity at dusk and dawn when mosquitos are the most active

(Insect bites, stings)

- Apply insect repellent (according to directions) before going into woods or areas you may contact insects
- Wear light-colored, long sleeved, long-legged clothing
- Do not wear perfumed lotion or scented hair products
- Avoid flowering plants
- Do not put your picnic out until you are ready to eat
- If you have severe allergic reactions to insect bites, have someone else mow lawns and trim hedges

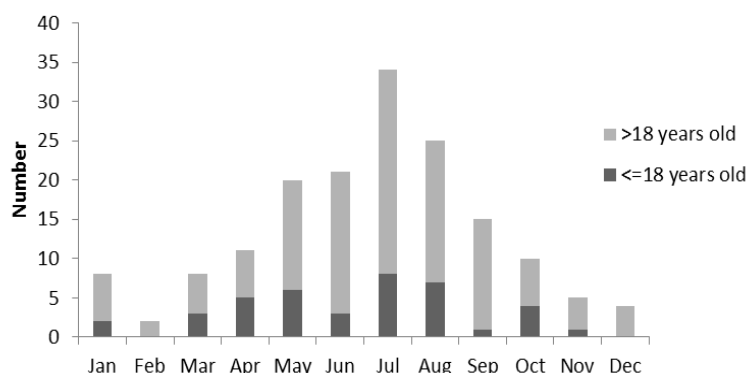
(Snakes)

- Avoid places where snakes may live
- Watch where you step or sit
- When moving through tall grass/weeds poke the ground in front of you with a long stick to scare away snakes
- Shine a flashlight on your path when walking at night
- Never handle a snake

(Drowning)

- Never leave children alone around water
- Supervise children carefully (put cell phone away; don't drink in excess)
- Know how to swim and teach children how to swim
- Take a safe boating course and wear a lifejacket

Figure 1. Number of unintentional deaths due to drowning and submersion, Montana, 2005-2012



Protection from ultraviolet light From 2008 through 2012, approximately 265 Montanans including 30 adolescents and young adults aged 15 to 39 years were diagnosed with melanoma each year.¹ Up to 90% of melanomas are caused by exposure to ultraviolet light.² Melanoma that occurs at a young age may indicate excessive, intermittent exposure to UV light from sources such as sun or indoor tanning devices.³ In 2013, one in five high school girls reported using an indoor tanning device with use more prevalent with increasing grade among female high school students (Figure 2).⁴

Prevention Steps: Be A.W.A.R.E.

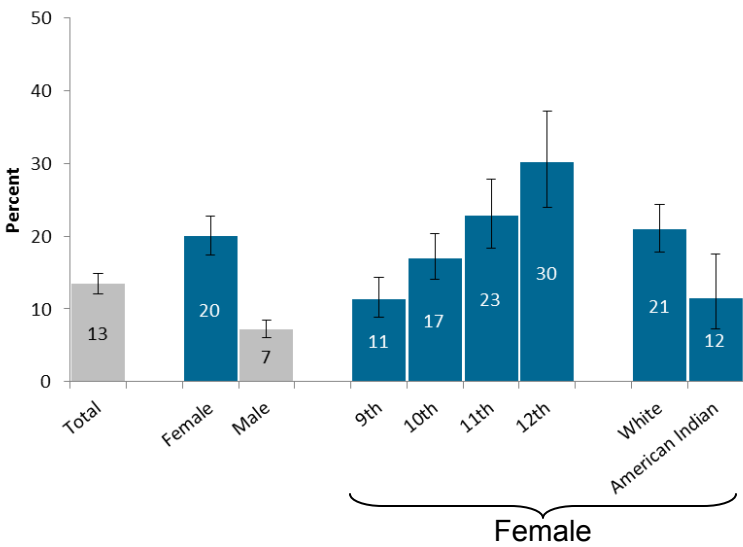
Avoid unprotected exposure to sunlight, seek shade, and never indoor tan.

Wear sun protective clothing, including a long-sleeved shirt, pants, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunglasses year-round.

Apply broad-spectrum sunscreen with a sunburn protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher.

Routinely examine your whole body for changes in your skin and report concerns to a healthcare provider.

Figure 2. Percent of high school students in Montana who reported that they used an indoor tanning device (such as a sun lamp, sunbed, or tanning booth) one or more times in the past 12 months⁴, 2013



Educate your family and community about the need to be Sun A.W.A.R.E.

Recommendations

Recommendations for prevention steps are included in the text in this issue of *Montana Public Health*

For more information, contact the Public Health and Safety Division, 406-444-4542

References

1. Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Montana Central Tumor Registry, 2008-2012.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Cancer Control and Prevention, Available at: http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin/basic_info/index.htm
3. Weir HK, Marrett LD, Cokkinides V, Barnholtz-Sloan J, Patel P, Tai E, et al. Melanoma in adolescents and young adults (ages 15-39 years): United States, 1999-2006. *J Am Acad Dermatol*;65(5 Suppl 1):S38-49
4. Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2013.